

**Preaching for the Sixth Sunday of Easter**  
**May 17, 2009**  
**S. Cecilia Canales, OP**

**Readings:**  
**Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48**  
**1 John 4:7-10**  
**John 15:9-17**

I don't know which word in our language is most commonly used in the title of songs, but it could be "love:" "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing," "What's Love Got to Do with It," "What the World Needs Now Is Love" to name a few. Love is used in vastly different ways and seems to mean a myriad of things and to justify all kinds of behaviors. But Jesus is very clear as to his meaning of the word by the context in which he uses it. "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love." He invites his followers into a love relationship that is total self-gift and all encompassing. It needs to be the purpose of our being, the core of our existence and the "because" of our actions. How does this happen?

There is both an active and a passive dimension to remaining in God's love: I intentionally choose to do this of my own free will and the more I choose it, the more it becomes a state of being. Someone once said that the only thing we have control over is our consciousness; the rest is God's action. Being this conscious requires discipline—I must keep choosing it and the selflessness this implies, even when I would rather not! If it were easy, we would be loving people all the time and I know that is not true for me. I am free to choose otherwise, and sometimes I do.

To remain in his love also implies fidelity to a "way of being." It implies staying for the long haul, to be there through thick and thin, to stay connected no matter what. It speaks of a prolonged relationship as well as a depth that knows no limits. There is nothing romantic or

superficial about it; the love of Jesus compelled him to lay down his life for his friends. It is a love you can count on and calls forth that same level of loving from us as well.

To the extent that I remain in this Trinitarian love, it has far reaching effects on me; it has the power to change me, transform me really, and to bear fruit in my way of relating to others. It speaks to a level of relationship and of presence which we recognize as significantly different whenever we experience it in someone else. You've met these people! They invite confidence, exude peace and joy, and are genuinely kind and caring. This is the fruit of a life work, a long term relationship with God. S. Hosanna Almaguer is the oldest member of our congregation; she is 106 and is now dying of cancer. I don't know how much pain she is in presently, but she spends her day praying aloud, praising God; as one of our sisters said, she has become a living prayer. She has remained in God's love and now there is nothing else in her life but to express this love. I want this to be true for me some day!

This love is a journey as well as a state of being. I become more loving as I keep choosing it. It is a gift that God offers us and the Spirit has been poured out upon us—we have received what we need to stay the course. “I have called you friends because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain.” What is the “fruit” that you are bearing at this point in your life? If you are a parent, raising your children may be the obvious answer, especially if they are young and still very much in need of your nurturing. But how else are you giving life? Who are the people in your daily life—in your workplace or travels or neighborhood—for whom you make a difference? Who would be impoverished if you were not around? All of these persons are signs that the resurrected Christ is alive and well in you and that

you are bearing fruit in his name! You are expressing the love you are experiencing by remaining in God's love.

So perhaps the song titles are right: What's love got to do with it? Everything! It can make all the difference in my life. Jesus told us to remain in his love to make our joy complete, our lives complete, meaningful. It's what the world needs and each one of us seeks. Love *is* a many splendored thing!